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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRUSSELS 004994

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: A/S ROCCA DISCUSSES SOUTH ASIA WITH EU

REF: THE HAGUE 2924

Classified By: USEU PolOff Sarah Groen for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) SUMMARY. On November 12 and 15 in Brussels, SA A/S Christina Rocca met with DG Robert Cooper of the European Council and DDG Herve Jouanjean of the European Commission to discuss the current situation and upcoming challenges in South Asia. A/S Rocca raised concerns about deteriorating political conditions in Bangladesh and the burgeoning narcotics problem in Afghanistan. EU officials provided a readout of the recent EU-India summit, and described what the new "strategic partnership" between the EU and India may look like. They discussed how European Commission (EC) assistance could be given a "clearer political foundation" to improve conditions in Bangladesh, requested that the US continue to encourage the Nepalese government and military to support human rights, and asked when the U.S. would be ready for another meeting of the Sri Lanka Donors Co-Chair Group. The Council's Cooper said he would look into having Nepal's Maoists placed under EU terrorist financing sanctions. END SUMMARY.

BANGLADESH

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2. (C) Conveying the seriousness of snowballing problems in Bangladesh was one of A/S Rocca's most urgent messages. She pointed out that the government of Bangladesh is nearly at a standstill, that violence is rising between political parties, and that extremist groups are gaining influence. The political problems will be exacerbated by job losses due to the expiration of the Multi-Fiber Agreement in January. Corruption at Bangladesh ports is a major area of concern. The USG was also concerned about the lack of transparency in the Bangladeshi investigation into the August 21 assassination attempt on Sheikh Hasina.

3. (C) Commission DDG Jouanjean, who had recently returned from a trip to Bangladesh, expressed deep concern about the situation there. He pointed out that general instability and increasing fundamentalism could pose major security problems for both the EU and the US. He discussed how EC assistance to Bangladesh could be used more effectively to address the political situation there, perhaps by tying assistance to benchmarks. Council interlocutors made the same point, saying EC assistance to Bangladesh could be given "a clearer political foundation," with more attention to which types of groups receive EU funds. Jouanjean also suggested the EU and U.S. get together with World Bank and others to explore how to deal with the situation in Bangladesh and work out a common strategy. Rocca agreed such a meeting could be useful.

AFGHANISTAN

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4. (C) A/S Rocca pointed out that another crisis requiring immediate attention is the increasing drug cultivation in Afghanistan. She told the EU officials that levels of poppy growth next year will likely be significantly higher than previously forecast, and that if action is not taken, Afghanistan risks deteriorating into a narco-state along the lines of Colombia. A multi-year plan for drug eradication and alternative livelihoods, with broad support from international donors, would be required to stave off the crisis. Such a program would need an Afghan face in order to be successful.

5. (C) Cooper agreed on the seriousness of the problem, but expressed a slightly different perspective, saying "tons of money" has already been spent on combating drugs in Afghanistan, and the problems remain. "The missing ingredient has been a functioning government," he said, and expressed optimism that as Karzai gains strength, he will be able to address the country's drug problems. He doubted that eradication alone could solve the problem, saying any eradication would have to take place in parallel with development of alternative livelihoods.

INDIA

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6. (C) A/S Rocca inquired about the recent EU-India summit, and what the new EU-India "strategic partnership" might look like (Reftel). Commission officials said the summit was a huge success, and that they were particularly impressed with

the "fantastic quality" of Manmohan Singh's participation. Both Council and Commission interlocutors said the partnership is still very undefined, but will likely include increased cooperation on opening markets, nonproliferation, counter-terrorism, and regulatory issues. New areas of cooperation will include energy, environment, industrial policy, and cultural dialogue. The next step is for expert-level working groups to create a more definitive action plan for cooperation between the EU and India, to be presented at next year's summit.

17. (C) A/S Rocca and Council officials agreed that a major priority for both the US and EU is to see India take more responsibility for export control. Cooper mentioned that perhaps the EU could talk to India about the EU peer review process on export controls.

PAKISTAN
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18. (C) On Pakistan, A/S Rocca expressed cautious optimism about ongoing India-Pakistan dialogue over Kashmir. "They know what has to be done," she said, "but they need to sense that the world is still watching." She said President Musharraf had made recent controversial remarks about "options" intentionally in order to force a public debate. Musharraf said that if Pakistan and Indian governments were to reach a solution in secret, and then try to force it on an unprepared public, the solution would not work.

19. (C) Cooper suggested that perhaps the EU could sponsor a seminar in Pakistan (or elsewhere in the region) to discuss ten European dilemmas involving ethnic enclaves (such as Macedonia, Northern Ireland or South Tyrol), to help foster a public dialogue about resolving the Kashmir issue.

NEPAL
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10. (C) A/S Rocca raised the issue of placing Nepal's Maoist rebels on the EU's finance terror list. Cooper responded that he was not sure why they were not already on the list, and said he would verify their status and inquire why the EU was resisting placing them on the list.

11. (C) Commission officials asked that the US continue to stress the importance of human rights in its dealings with the Nepalese government and military, asserting that "If there is no accord on human rights, it undermines everything." In her Council meeting, A/S Rocca pointed out that all U.S. training programs for the Nepalese government and military have a human rights component and suggested other nations could also provide human rights training.

SRI LANKA
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12. (C) Regarding the Sri Lanka Donors Co-Chair Group, Commission DDG Jouanjean asked when the next round of meetings could take place, suggesting December. A/S Rocca said that with personnel changes in the Department of State, the timeline for the next meetings could not be determined yet, but that Deputy Secretary Armitage is not opposed to a co-chairs meeting.

13. (U) A/S Rocca has cleared this message.

Schnabel